

Mono County Local Transportation Commission

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MINUTES

May 12, 2014
(Adopted June 9, 2014)

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Tim Fesko, Larry Johnston, Fred Stump

TOWN COMMISSIONERS: Jo Bacon, Sandy Hogan, Matthew Lehman

COUNTY STAFF: Scott Burns, Stacey Simon, Jeff Walters, Gerry Le Francois, Wendy Sugimura, Garrett Higerd, Megan Mahaffey, Nancy Mahannah, C.D. Ritter

TOWN STAFF: Peter Bernasconi, Haislip Hayes

CALTRANS: Ryan Dermody, Stephen Winzenread

ESTA: Jill Batchelder

GUESTS: Tim Hansen, Robert Davis, Brooke Bien, Lois Klein

1. **CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Jo Bacon called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., and attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Robert Davis and Brooke Bien (Mammoth Unified School District) showed changes in school parking and traffic control due to daily traffic bottleneck. Haislip Hayes cited traffic flow in parking lot as a problem. Isolate parking for staff, visitors and parents from traffic flow, add roundabouts. Have two lanes each for entrance and exit. Hayes saw circulation issue turn into safety project. Add sidewalks for student access. In-town bus for elementary only; afternoon bus home for Mammoth and Crowley students. Reduced number of stops at central pickup points. Two new traffic/parking schemes were proposed.

Johnston proposed a less-costly scheme. Davis wanted to get LTC involved. IMACA talked of possible relocation sites, but nothing definite. IMACA owns its building, separate from school.

Nancy Mahannah indicated Head Start has 20 kids, plus quite a waiting list. She had concern with off-campus move due to relationship of low-income parents with school. Squeaky wheels shouldn't run the show, she said.

3. **MINUTES:**

MOTION: Approve minutes of April 14, 2014, as amended: Commissioner Reports, 1) line 5: Sequoia/Kings wants two-year pilot program **of its own**. 2) Last line: ...another four-lane project **utilizing Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP)** is unlikely. (Fesko/Hogan. Ayes: 5. Abstain due to absence: Lehman.)

4. **ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Unmet Transit Needs:** Wendy Sugimura included public comments in new table. Funding new service means taking away from other services.

Commissioner Stump asked about identified need that is not reasonable to meet. *It's carried forward till funding is available; not forgotten, put into other documents.* Stump asked if there's a way to memorialize needs. *No docs on annual basis.* Scott Burns cite a short-range transit plan every five years. Commissioner Hogan indicated plans don't sit on a shelf, but are used by transportation planners. Grants need references. Burns noted Sugimura started with last year's list. *Only projects in coordinated transit plan were considered, funneled toward funding sources.*

MOTION: Adopt Resolution R14-06 on Unmet Transit Needs. (Johnston/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.)

B. **Overall Work Program (OWP) budget amendment:** Megan Mahaffey presented changes to tables.

MOTION: Adopt Minute Order M14-04 authorizing 2013-14 Overall Work Program (OWP) budget amendment (Fesko/Lehman. Ayes: 6-0.)

C. Cal-OES Transit Security Grant Program project: Wendy Sugimura described application that basically improves security of transit operations with solar bus stop lighting in Mammoth. Where is lighting? Jill Batchelder indicated stops with just a pole, withstand wind, shields for Dark Sky Regulations. Commissioner Johnston noted lights along Meridian are very bright, unshielded. Don't use.

MOTION: Adopt Resolution R14-07 approving FY 13-14 Cal-OES Transit Security Grant Program project (*Johnston/Lehman. Ayes: 6-0.*)

D. Inyo-Mono Counties Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan: Jill Batchelder noted 50-50 Inyo/Mono split. "Coordinated plan" is updated every five years. Commissioner Johnston suggested legend on p. 49 needs another category, different colors to differentiate better. Compiled through ESTA? Batchelder cited coordinated community meetings and survey. ESTA board did not approve. Commissioner Hogan saw it as an excellent reference. Mobility manager position on wish list? Batchelder confirmed. Commissioner Stump wondered if Mono workers who live in NV were counted. Scott Burns indicated Census data are a sample, not necessarily as strong as would like.

MOTION: Adopt Resolution R14-08 approving Update (*Johnston/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.*)

5. COMMISSIONER REPORTS: Stump: Follow-up with Lt. Cohen of CHP on SWITRS. Get accurate data set from all sources for real picture of deer slaughter, especially SR 203 to Crowley. **Hogan:** Motorcyclists and cars hit deer, too. Trails meetings included Ormat presentation on 16 proposed wells. **Johnston:** Testified among 100 at California Air Resources Board April 24 on adding Inyo and Mono counties to "not exempt" category. Moved deadline on replacement. Diesel filters work if maintained properly. Add mechanic instead of equipment. Great Basin has funding source of \$1.3 million for wood stove replacements to improve air quality. Wildlife: Near-human fatalities in areas discussed at LTC. Favored geothermal, but not at expense of drinking water. Air pollution control officer urged adequate mitigation. CEQA was conducted on all issues (air and water). **Stump:** Components could be challenged. **Johnston:** MCWD is working hard. **Fesko:** Hats off to Caltrans for reopening Tioga and Sonora passes. Big difference to businesses. **Bacon:** Low-cost option to Whitmore Pool by ESTA.

6. ADMINISTRATION

A. Legal opinion on LTC composition: Stacey Simon started with how Caltrans participates in LTC. Nothing new in terms of law. Some transportation agencies are governed by federal law. Staff conducted survey on similar LTCs and provided new handout. Five LTCs have Caltrans member as ex officio, 16 do not. RTPAs? Many of the other RTPA's had different legislation than LTCs that Mono County falls under. Bulk had Caltrans rep appointed by governor. Conclusion: County or Town has appointing authority to make Caltrans a voting member, but would need to remove one of the current Town or County members to do so. Only caveat is concern of conflict of interest, incompatible offices, etc. If governor appoints to the other RTPAs, then there is strong inference it does not. Can request opinion from AG's office on incompatible offices. Anyone at table might have conflict of interest and recuse self. Neither 1090 nor political reform act prevent appointment of Caltrans rep. Seventh member: Majority interpreted that as if no transit district or member from transit operators. Unclear if no transit district. Bias toward majority read.

B. LTC Handbook clarification on Caltrans participation on LTC: Scott Burns noted LTC has always enjoyed its partnership with Caltrans and could formalize good working relationship by removing confusing language. Caltrans is a state agency. Commissioner Fesko wondered why ESTA's not sitting here, and did not see real benefit of Caltrans sitting at the table. Commissioner Hogan noted it would be conflict of interest to have ESTA sitting at the table, as LTC contracts with ESTA. Commission always listens with same respect wherever people sit. Ryan Dermody stated Caltrans sees it as a benefit, and it's happening throughout California. He recalled many times refraining from speaking on inaccuracies when seated in audience. Fesko thought nobody in audience should have to refrain from speaking. Fesko asked for an example. Dermody knew background on a permit issue stated by a staff member that portrayed Caltrans negatively, and that's not what happened. Project discussions sometimes are controversial, and Caltrans brings technical skill to table. Commissioner Hogan saw LTC as formal, yet informal, allowing any comment at any time from audience. Caltrans is our technical advisor. Commissioner Bacon cited purse strings also. Fesko thought purse strings made an even bigger conflict and didn't want Caltrans to influence the discussion. Bacon thought it would shorten timeline for LTC staff to negotiate with Caltrans staff. Commissioner Johnston noted Town could appoint Caltrans. Bacon indicated Hallenbeck said that he did not want to be appointed. Johnston was

proponent of seventh member to eliminate potential for tie votes. Commissioner Stump thought that if Caltrans sees a difference, that's good enough. Can't get anywhere in county without utilizing state highways. Caltrans identified need to facilitate input. Fesko asked if sitting at table would give more weight that could intimidate LTC commissioners. Stump hoped that commissioners were not that weak-minded. Dermody noted that Caltrans wants to strengthen partnerships. Opportunity to sit at table could bring discussion to another level. Integrate conversation of candid comments at table. Hogan noted staff could bring up corrections, but audience input might be based on opinions or rumors, not fact. Tim Hansen recalled public complaints about road closures, bad feelings, stuff not true. If Caltrans had been able to speak truth at the table rather than sit in the audience, maybe problems could have been avoided. Bacon noted Hogan is an "outside member." Johnston suggested review in a year, see how it's working.

MOTION: Approve LTC Handbook changes. (*Stump/Hogan. Ayes: 6-0.*)

7. **LOCAL TRANSPORTATION:** No items

8. **TRANSIT**

A. **Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA):** Shoulder season: Red Line every 30 minutes. Summer: Lakes Basin trolley starts May 24, with 17-bike trailer + three racks on trolley. Town trolley will run 30 minutes, then 20 minutes. Whitmore trip included. Phone check on arrival times will be available by June.

B. **Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS):** Scott Burns indicated Fresno COG moving forward next year. June 1 is start date for eastside YARTS.

9. **CALTRANS**

A. **Potential Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) project:** Ryan Dermody cited MOUs with Inyo, Kern, and sometimes San Bernardino. Mono LTC needs to select an MOU project to start work on the Project Study Report (PSR) in July of 2015, construction would be around the year 2026. With PSR on shelf, can look for other pots of money. Once LTC decision is firm, set long-term goal to accomplish. Commissioner Johnston was on LTC in mid-1990s. Sending big money south was very productive for a long time. Leverage as much as possible. AGENDA: Memorialize decision next meeting. Minute order too.

Commissioner Stump asked if LTC could pick two at same cost as North Conway passing lanes. Dermody indicated it would be OK to combine projects. The PSR will have several alternatives.

Chair Bacon left at 10:40 a.m. for another meeting & passed gavel to Vice-Chair Stump.

Johnston recalled a truck going 25 mph uphill at the North Conway location, with five or six cars behind. One car passed on double yellow all the way up. Probably 10 passing zones exist in Bridgeport Valley, straightaways; maybe eligible for other funding. If North Conway bottleneck is not fixed now, it likely will never get done. Leverage funding sources. Johnston viewed people passing illegally in Bridgeport Valley as accidents waiting to happen, but Commissioner Fesko thought people pass where they want to, whether legal or not.

Commissioner Lehman cited rocks as problematic on North Conway. Seems like a lot of money. People speed, do what they're not supposed to – it's not the lanes. He never saw big issue north of Bridgeport.

Fesko cited an 18-mi stretch of no passing lanes from the bottom of the North Conway four lanes to the Devils Gate four lanes. Bridgeport townsite became de facto passing lanes due to no safe passing north. He suggested combining projects to create overall major benefit to two big areas, not just one. Commissioner Hogan mentioned all that money for very short stretch. Traveling to Tahoe every two weeks since 1986, she thought maybe three minutes were added to uphill. Go with two projects. Stump wanted public input. Tim Hansen, a professional truck driver who worked for Caltrans, claimed it's about safety, period and that the North Conway project should be the priority. Financial constraints exist. Dermody noted rockfall on North Conway would have to rise to level of accidents to address a rockfall-only project. After more discussion and several failed motions, a combination of projects was selected:

MOTION: Combine and rename Bridgeport Passing Lanes + North Conway. (*Hogan/Fesko. Ayes: 4. No: Lehman. Absent: Bacon.*)

DISCUSSION: Ryan Dermody asked if LTC wants to lock down its entire STIP budget for this MOU project in future cycles. Gerry Le Francois stated Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP) money may not be there, renegotiate MOUs for lower percentage. Garrett Higerd suggested taking away one or two funding cycles. Le Francois recalled \$8 million set aside for Olancho-Cartago. Inyo's projects are off the table a couple cycles. Commissioner Stump wondered if pavement maintenance funds could disappear. Commissioner

Johnston recalled that California Transportation Commission liked MOUs, didn't scrutinize Mono's local projects. Le Francois reminded Mono committed \$17 million to 2014 RTIP.

Dermody stated Caltrans is developing a work plan, and today is the target date to make a decision on an MOU project.

Johnston saw no overwhelming need for passing lanes in other areas and predicted North Conway, biggest bottleneck, would never get fixed if not a priority today. Commissioner Fesko asked, "Never?" Johnston clarified, "In our lifetimes." Commissioner Hogan described that as just an opinion. Why not State Highway Operation & Protection Program (SHOPP)? Dermody noted all three projects could be SHOPP if they met certain criteria like the Highpoint project. Hogan stated economics go up and down, nothing happens overnight, and public works is a slow process.

B. Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS): Ryan Dermody introduced Stephen Winzenread, who discussed the database used by all enforcement agencies. Reports must be taken and submitted. Current two-year backlog and existing data are dated. Dermody asked if submittal must be by law enforcement. *Yes. Dispatchers receive records, but driver not reporting doesn't get into system.* Commissioner Johnston thought a deer hit by someone should be reported as an accident. *System is set up for law agency to report.* Johnston stated California Department of Fish & Wildlife investigates. Dermody noted Caltrans is creating its own database in addition to SWITRS, but how does it get into SWITRS for whole picture? Commissioner Hogan suggested setting up system of accident reporting. Commissioner Stump noted sheriff does not enter into SWITRS due to concern of double entry. Highway incidents are California Highway Patrol (CHP) responsibility. Peter Bernasconi stated Mammoth police no longer take accident reports unless injury occurs. Stump noted counter reports are not entered, and CHP Lt. Cohen said only officer-driven reports enter SWITRS. Hogan recalled that Mono does dispatch for MLPD, so maybe focus on dispatchers. Stump acknowledged diverse data sets. Johnston thought it should be an IT solution. Dermody thought accidents on County roads need to be reported to SWITRS. AGENDA: Working group, include IT.

C. Caltrans policy for special events: Commissioner Johnston recalled that Caltrans required additional signage for Bridgeport's July 4 parade. Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) noted all parade sites were affected. New signs, engineer sign-off. Stephen Winzenread recalled local agencies had been eliminated from handling traffic. Traffic Control Plans Must be signed and stamped by civil engineer. Encroachment manual changed now, so local traffic control is OK. Commissioner Fesko cited \$3,000 spent on signs. Jeff Walters suggested using signs approved by Caltrans. Johnston thought Caltrans and Mono should discuss, get with ESCOG. Walters noted Caltrans assisted with manpower and materials in past, but no longer due to liability issues, funds for private event. Chamber needs to acquire signs. Commissioner Stump asked about statewide or district change on equipment loaning. No gift of public funds if equipment is returned by governmental entity. Caltrans needs to clarify policy to accommodate local needs. Dermody asked about letter to respective boards as a way to disseminate the information. Johnston suggested a report to ESCOG.

D. Activities in Mono County & pertinent statewide information: Storms have been great for bringing water, but close passes. Passes open and close, open and close.

10. **QUARTERLY REPORTS** (*question/answer format*)

A. Town of Mammoth Lakes: Peter Bernasconi reviewed projects under way. Commissioner Hogan asked if Measure R funds were designated for Waterford Gap. *No.*

B. Mono County: Garrett Higerd mentioned new engineer Paul Roten and then outlined projects, noting Federal Highway Administration is fast-tracking Convict Lake Road. Edison discovered power cable to upper Rock Creek Road facilities is in bad shape, need to replace underground all nine miles (almost solid granite), with six weeks to devise plan and three to four months of construction. If can't coordinate, would mean saw cut entire road. Huge issue. Roten encouraged solar utilities. Commissioner Stump recommended that fiber optics be included if conduit is installed.

C. Caltrans: Chart showed Mono County projects.

Commissioner Hogan commended knowledgeable people working on quarterlies.

11. **UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:** 1) Vote on MOU; 2) LTF fund; 3) coordinate SWITRS; 4) special events.

12. **ADJOURN** at 12:08 p.m. to June 9, 2014.

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, LTC secretary